DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 539 CS 213 712

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE Philosophy of Teaching English in the Junior College.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College English; *Educational Philosophy; English Curriculum; English Instruction; Higher Education; Problem Solving; *Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS English Teachers

ABSTRACT

Instructors in junior college English courses need to study, analyze, and experiment with diverse philosophies of teaching. A problem solving philosophy is one worth emphasizing, in which the instructor guides students to select vital problems from a stimulating learning environment. After a problem is identified, information is gathered by the students and a hypothesis is developed. Another philosophy emphasizes an idea centered curriculum, in which the teacher selects sequential content for students to achieve. The idea centered curriculum for English teachers focuses on the acquisition of facts and information, the noting of logical sequences, and more abstract thinking. Third, a measurement driven instruction model for teaching might be employed. Here, vital goals for student achievement are selected and stated in behavioral terms. Measurement driven philosophies emphasize what is expected of students, along with frequent testing or evaluation. A fourth model for English teaching is existentialism, which would provide students with an open-ended curriculum from which they might select their own areas to pursue. Existentialist philosophy advocates that the students be responsible for their own decisions, and enjoins teachers to foster such an outlook by stressing decision-making in an absurd world of endless possibility. Of all of these philosophies, perhaps the one best suited for the junior college is the problem solving model, since it works well within the literature curriculum. (HB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED354539

Marlow Ediger 1992

PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE JUNIOR COLLEGE

Instructors in junior college English courses need to study, analyze, and experiment with diverse philosophies of teaching. This is needed so that each student may attain optimally. English instructors need to provide learning opportunities which are:

1. meaningful as well as understandable.

2. interesting and capture learner attention.

3. purposeful and guide students to perceive reasons for achieving and acquiring.

4. challenging and provide an increased energy level for attainment.

5. sequential so that each previous step of learning provides background content to attain that which represents new facts, concepts, and generalizations.

The principles of learning represent a vital framework for instruction as advocated by the educational psychology arena.

Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

A problem solving philosophy might be emphasized. Here, the instructor guides students to select vital problems from a stimulating learning environment. Thus, in classical literature, students with teacher guidance have identified the problem - How did Gottfried Leibnitz come to emphasize this world as the best of all possible worlds as compared to Arthur Schopenhauer's belief that this life is evil and filled with the undesirable? Once a problem has been identified with

CS213713

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Marlow Ediger
BEST COPY AVAILABLE
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

clarity by an individual, a committee, or the class as a whole, data or information needs to be gathered. The subject matter attained relates directly to the identified problem. Data can come a variety of reference sources pertaining to the classics. A hypothesis or answer to the problem is then developed. The hypothesis is tentative, not an absolute. Being tentative, the hypothesis is subject to testing. The testing is done through further research utilizing a variety of reference materials. The hypothesis is then either accepted, modified, or refuted as a result of the testing.

Problem solving in the literature curriculum emphasizes:

1. students being actively involved in selecting relevant questions and problems.

2. critical thinking being necessary to the solving of problems. To separate the relevant from the irrelevant in data gathering, analysis as a process needs to be stressed to secure needed content in answer to the chosen problem.

3. creative thinking being in evidence with novel, unique solutions needed to solve problems. Rigidity and formality in responding to identified problem areas are the opposite of mental operation on data as a vital skill in creative thinking.

4. skills being applicable to all facets of the literature curriculum, as well as to situations in life itself.

5. sequence being inherent in the learner himself/herself. The student then orders the flexible steps of problem solving.

A second philosophy in the teaching of English emphasizes an idea centered curriculum. Vital subject matter then needs to be acquired by

students. The English teacher on the junior college level selects sequential content for students to achieve. A single or multiple series of textbooks provide objectives of instruction. Thus, in a unit or course on the classics, the instructor may emphasize the following sequence of subject matter on the thinking of Rene Decartes:

1. doubting everything in life until he (Decartes) realized that doubting was occurring and therefore existence is in evidence. Students then need to attach meaning to Decartes famous statement, "I think, therefore, I am".

2. Assuming that a benevolent God existed who would not deceive.

3. stressing a deductive method in arriving at truth. Starting with a generalization, the writer deductively develops sequential statements. Deductive thinking ends when no further statements can be written or the writer is uncertain about the accuracy of the next sequential statement.

4. conceiving God in the mind and thus making the supernatural Being possible.

An idea centered curriculum emphasizes idealism as a philosophy of English instruction. Mental development becomes a major goal of teaching and learning. Mind is real and needs development. Challenging, stimulating subject matter in the junior college English curriculum motivates optimal student progress.

Idea centered philosophies in the teaching of English stress:

1. the will of the student being involved in acquiring vital facts, concepts, and generalizations. The will is on opposite ends of the continuum as compared to pure learner interest.

2. learners feeling motivated with abstract content pertaining to the classics, rather than concrete to semi-concrete experiences.

3. utilization of higher levels of cognition to achieve abstractions in the classics. Optimal mental development of students becomes a major objective of instruction.

4. instructors developing a logical sequence for students to attain optimally. The junior college English instructor orders objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures logically for students. Opposite of the logical curriculum, students sequence activities with instructor guidance.

5. knowledge goals being more salient for student acquisition, as compared to skills and attitudinal ends. Skills and attitudinal objectives become salient as they assist students to achieve knowledge ends. Idealism emphasizes a subject centered curriculum.

Third, a measurement driven instruction (MDI) model for teaching junior college English may be emphasized. Here, the instructor needs to select carefully vital goals for student achievement. These goals are stated in behavioral terms and contain an indicator or a minimal level of acceptable achievement. With precise objectives, the instructor measures if a student has/has not achieved sequential ends. The junior college English instructor teaching the classics may teach so that students attain the following in MDI:

1. The student will write a 100 word paper on Spinoza's beliefs in pantheism.

2. The student will write ten summary statements pertaining to Spinoza's emphasis on stoicism as a philosophy of life.

3. The student will present a twenty minute report to the class on why Spinoza refuted beliefs in miracles and supernatural events.

4. The student will explain the meaning of Spinoza being God intoxicated.

Learning opportunities are selected to guide students to achieve each of the above objectives. Reading materials as well as audio-visual aids may be utilized as learning activities to assist goal attainment on the part of students to achieve each end. Those goals not attained by a student may well require a different teaching strategy. Tests utilized to measure if students have attained each objective need to be valid. Thus the measurement instrument determines if objectives have been achieved. The measurement instrument should also be reliable, be it test-retest, alternative forms, or split half reliability.

Vital, carefully selected subject matter should be contained in each objective. Each objective needs to be written with a high degree of specificity. With precise ends, the objectives emphasize clearly what will be taught. Little or no interpretation will be involved in interpreting what students are to learn within each objective.

Measurement driven philosophies in teaching the classics, on the junior college level emphasize:

1. students knowing prior to instruction what is expected of them. Students might then be certain what to acquire and learn in order to receive top grades in the class.

2. instructors should announce to the class what the latter are to learn as a result of instruction.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

3. frequent testing should occur to note if the precise ends have been attained by students.

4. unachieved objectives need to have a different set of learning activities. Each objective ideally should be achieved by students.

5. tests need to be aligned with the objectives to be valid.

Fourth, existentialism in teaching the classics may be emphasized. With existentialism, the student is actively involved in selecting sequential content to read. An open ended classics curriculum is then in evidence. The junior college English instructor selects a wide variety of classical writers from which students may choose which to read sequentially, as well as means of appraising progress. The instructor is a guide and stimulator. If other classical writings would interest a student more so than those listed by the instructor, a conference may be held to evaluate and approve the proposal. The learner is actively involved in establishing and pursuing personal goals in classical literature, learning activities, and evaluation procedures. A student with instructor guidance may wish to compare:

1. John Locke's tabula rasa theory versus David Hume's skepticism on the possibility of acquiring knowledge.

2. Plato's ideal Republic with Thomas Companella's City in the Sun. The latter represents a utopia for its inhabitants with an emphasis upon communal living. The former stresses a just society when dividing inhabitants into being artisans, warriors, and rulers.

3. Bertrand Rusell's molecular and atomic statements with Jean Paul Sartre's thesis that knowledge is subjective, not objective. Thus truth

is in the eye of the beholder. Russell believed truth to be objective and independent of any observer.

Existentialists advocate that:

1. each person is responsible for decisions made. No one else can then be blamed for the consequences. The student is personally accountable for results of acts and deeds. Existential literature then becomes highly relevant.

2. decisions need to be made by the self within a framework of endless possibilities. Each student then needs to choose classical selections to read, as well as methods of appraising progress with instuctor guidance.

3. an absurd, ridiculous world is in the offing. Within this framework, decisions must be made. Classical literature may provide content for decision-making.

4. the individual needs to make selections to be human. If others make the decisions for the self, the latter no longer is human. Literary selections read may be evaluated on the basis of decisions made by involved characters. Alternative possible decisions, other than those stated in the writing, should also be adequately considered by the reader.

5. each individual chooses to make the kind of world he/she desires. With choices, the ideal kind of society is developed. The individual making what is desirable through decision-making needs to be contrasted with the environment determining that which happens or transpires.

In Summary

The junior college English instructor needs to provide meaningful, interesting, purposeful, challenging, as well as sequential experiences for students.

Diverse philosophies may be stressed in teaching and learning. These include:

1. problem solving procedures.
2. idea centered approaches.
3. measurement driven instruction.
4. decision-making strategies.

The writer recommends problem solving strategies be utilized frequently. Problem solving emphasizes depth, not survey, understanding of the classics. Problem solving is a process that works well in the literature curriculum, as well as in life's situations. Idea centered approaches may well provide content for problem solving. Decision making strategies might emphasize which problem, from among alternatives, to solve. Measurement driven instruction may emphasize fragmented knowledge unless definite attempts are made to emphasize holism and the gestalt in the classical literature curriculum.